



Ann Arbor
Center of Excellence
Director: Rodney A. Hayward, MD
Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2008

Since the Ann Arbor Center of Excellence (CoE) became a full Center in 1996, it has gone from a small group of investigators with 2 active VA-funded projects to an elite health services research center with 33 core investigators and annual funding of \$14.7 million in FY '08. Our Center is producing innovative research directed at improving the health and healthcare of veterans and the nation. In particular, our CoE focuses on clinical practice management issues for those conditions that account for a large proportion of the costs and preventable morbidity and mortality in VHA.

We separate our priority area of clinical practice management into three research foci:

- To improve our understanding of how to measure, monitor, and understand quality and efficiency for a patient population with substantial disease burden;
- To rigorously examine alternative and innovative systems and strategies for efficiently improving quality and outcomes for common serious and chronic illnesses; and
- To develop and apply improved methodologies for informing policy makers regarding heterogeneity in the effectiveness and safety of proposed interventions and for assessing barriers to the implementation of high-priority care.

The key strength of our Center is in our multidisciplinary core of superb investigators, which includes nationally renowned experts in a broad spectrum of disciplines important for quality improvement, including performance measurement and incentives, decision-making psychology, organizational and behavioral change, systems design, and practical policy experience. The scope and variety of the available training programs is also a major strength of the Center's research environment, with the presence of an Office of Academic Affairs post-doctoral fellowship program and a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program, which includes 2 new VA OAA-funded scholars each year.

Within the Ann Arbor COE there are five smaller centers focusing on diabetes (QUERI-DM), serious mental illness, health care decisions, patient safety, and quality improvement for complex chronic conditions. All of these programs are possible because of the generous support of our VISN, the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, and our University affiliate.

Quality Enhancement Research Initiative—Diabetes Mellitus (QUERI-DM). Since spring 1998, the Ann Arbor HSR&D CoE has served as the Research Coordinating Center for QUERI-DM. The overall goal of QUERI-DM is to reduce rates of preventable morbidity and mortality among veterans with diabetes. Within this overarching goal, we have the following priority areas: (1) optimizing management of cardiovascular risk factors to prevent cardiovascular complications and mortality; (2) decreasing rates of other diabetes-related complications, especially prevention of visual loss, lower-extremity ulcers and amputation, and renal disease; (3) improving patient self-management; and (4) better management of patients with diabetes and other chronic co-morbid conditions. In addition, QUERI-DM is actively engaged in work to advance clinically meaningful quality and performance measurement both for directly promoting quality improvement and for assessing the results of quality improvement interventions for patients with diabetes. Web site: www.diabetesqueri.research.va.gov/.

Serious Mental Illness Treatment, Research, and Evaluation Center (SMITREC). SMITREC was originally

established in 1992 as the Center for Long Term Mental Health Evaluation and continues as an ongoing special evaluation and research field program of the Mental Health Strategic Health Group at VA Central Office. The primary goal of SMITREC is to conduct relevant treatment research and evaluation studies on ways to optimize clinical outcomes for veterans with serious mental illness. In addition to receiving intramural and extramural research grants, SMITREC receives funds from VA Mental Health and Behavioral Science Service to carry out projects of system-wide interest to VHA, including maintaining several national patient registries. Web site: www.annarbor.hsrd.research.va.gov/smitrecindex.htm.

Center for Behavioral and Decision Sciences in Medicine (CBDSM). Established in 2000 (originally the Program for Improving Health Care Decisions) by Peter Ubel (1998 ARCD), MD, CBDSM is an interdisciplinary research center jointly sponsored by the CoE and the University of Michigan. CBDSM researchers examine health behavior and health care decision making from many perspectives (including patients, physicians, and policy makers), with the goal of improving health care policy and health care practice. Web site: www.cbds.org.

VA/UM Patient Safety Program. Tim Hofer, MD, and Sanjay Saint, MD, direct the VA/UM Patient Safety Program, which was established with funds from AHRQ in 2001. The overall goal of the Program is to assemble interdisciplinary teams of investigators and mentor junior clinician investigators to conduct creative, high impact research in the following areas: (1) preventing hospital and nursing home adverse events; (2) enhancing patient safety in ambulatory care; (3) improving medical decision making by physicians and patients as an error reduction strategy; and (4) improving our understanding of the reliability and validity of error assessment. Web site: www.med.umich.edu/psep.

VA/UM Program on Quality Improvement for Complex Chronic Conditions (QUICCC). This program, established in May 2006, is directed by Drs. John Piette and Eve Kerr from our Center. QUICCC's goal is to coordinate and advance research to develop and evaluate novel interventions that improve the efficiency and quality of care for chronically ill VA and non-VA patients, with an emphasis on identifying services that support effective primary care and patient self management. The program is also designed to provide a forum for developing VA junior investigators interested in interventional health services research. Web site: www.med.umich.edu/QUICCC/index.htm.